



Westbank Asbestos SITE UPDATE

An EPA Update on Activities at the
Westbank Asbestos Superfund Removal Site
New Orleans Vicinity, Louisiana

August 30, 1996

EPA Superfund Response Actions to Begin October, 1996

This Fact Sheet Will Tell You About:

- Background information
- Past Activities
- Upcoming Activities
- Where to get more information

Asbestos Removal Action to Begin

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality (LDEQ) are working to address environmental problems related to asbestos containing material in the Westbank area near New Orleans, LA. In October 1996, the agencies will begin a removal action to excavate and dispose of asbestos containing material (ACM) in approximately 600 locations scattered throughout the Westbank area. The removal action will take about 7 to 9 months to complete

unless additional locations where ACM is deposited are identified. As the ACM is removed, it will be replaced with a non-hazardous material of similar type, such as crushed limestone. The material will be transported by dump trucks to a local landfill permitted to accept asbestos. Every effort will be made to minimize truck traffic in neighborhoods and around schools. Extensive dust control measures and air monitoring will be used to prevent airborne dispersion of any asbestos during the excavation and transportation of the ACM. Once the removal is complete, any known threat to human health and the environment posed by the exposed ACM will be eliminated.

Background Information

The Westbank Asbestos site ("Site") consists of six communities located on the opposite bank of the Mississippi River from the city of New Orleans, Louisiana. The Site includes the Jefferson Parish communities of Bridge City, Westwego, Marrero, Harvey, and Gretna, and the Orleans Parish community of Algiers. The Site consists of the areas determined to

be contaminated with asbestos-containing materials (ACM).

The apparent source of the ACM was from a manufacturing facility that operated in Marrero. The plant produced an asbestos containing aggregate as a by-product of manufacturing operations. The aggregate was pulverized in a hammer mill and mixed with a filler, usually composed of gypsum, dolomite, or calcite. The asbestos aggregate and filler formed a concrete-like material when mixed with water and therefore was considered by many local residents to be a concrete substitute for construction purposes. During the period of 1955 to 1965, this ACM was offered to local residents at little or no cost. Consequently, many areas in Westbank residential communities surrounding the former plant contain ACM.

Past Activities

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality (LDEQ) first began assessing the Westbank site in 1988. Periodic site inspections and monitoring indicated no

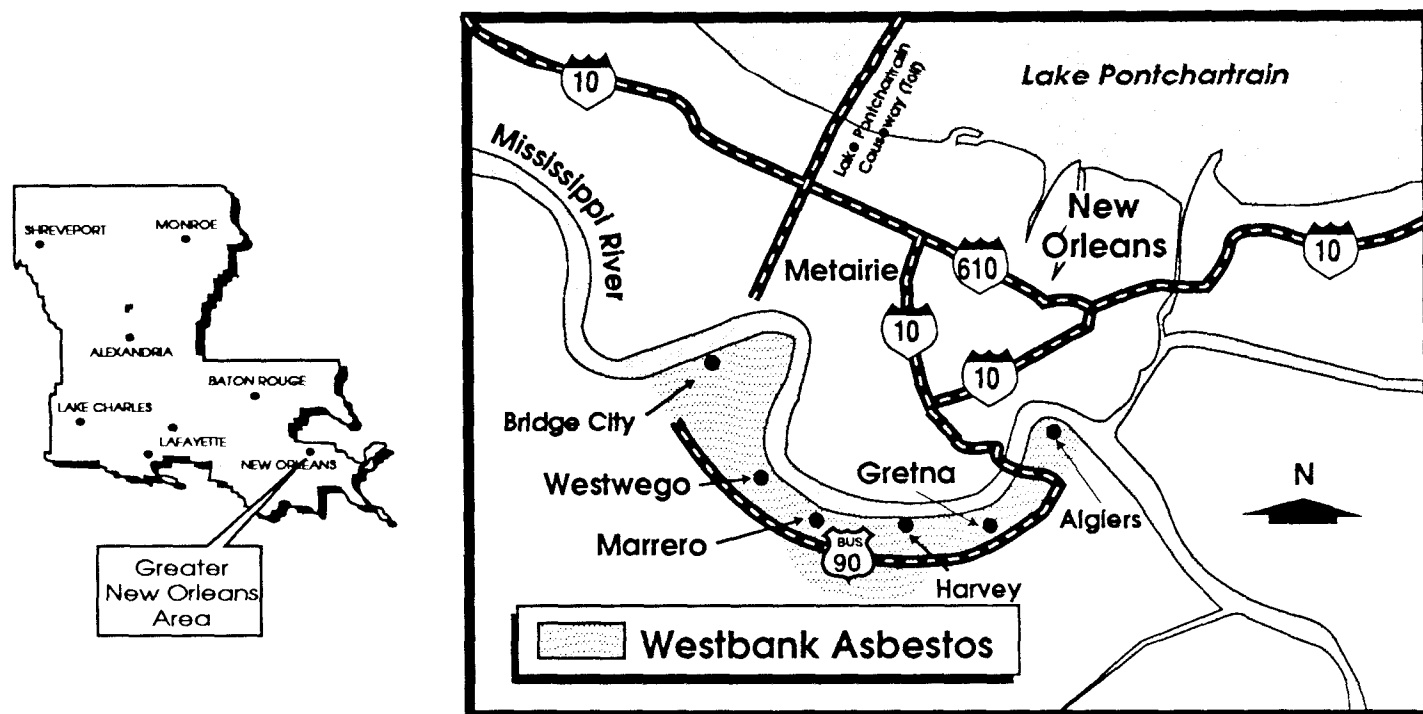


Figure 1 - Westbank Asbestos Site Map

ACM cleanup was needed at that time. However, in November 1995 concerns that the ACM had deteriorated to an unacceptable level prompted EPA to conduct a thorough re-assessment of the Site. In January and February 1996, EPA and LDEQ conducted a street by street visual inspection of potential ACM areas. This inspection found approximately 600 locations with deteriorating ACM, including driveways, rights-of-way, walkways, and playground areas.

In most of these locations, mechanical disturbances such as walking, recreational activities, lawn maintenance, and driving are causing continued deterioration of the ACM. If this deterioration is allowed to continue, the ACM will turn to a powder which can become windblown and airborne.

What Happens Next

Based on the results of the latest assessment, EPA and LDEQ have determined that a removal action is necessary and appropriate at this time. The ACM now poses a substantial threat of releasing asbestos into the environment. EPA plans to address this threat by excavating and transporting the ACM to a local landfill for proper disposal.

The removal action is scheduled to begin in October 1996. The estimated 90 ACM locations found within one block of schools and daycare centers will be addressed first. These locations are used by children and are of greatest concern. The remaining ACM locations will be addressed based on scheduling and logistics of work crews.

A sufficient volume of ACM will be removed from each property to significantly reduce the potential for future asbestos releases. The visible ACM will be excavated from the surface in publicly accessible areas. The excavated areas will then be restored by replacing the excavated ACM and soil with similar materials.

To avoid affecting structural integrity, EPA will not remove the ACM found under houses, buildings, concrete slabs, and roadways, etc. These types of sites account for only a small amount of ACM and are not considered significant asbestos sources as they are not usually subject to mechanical disturbance. However, each site will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis to determine if the ACM needs to be addressed further.

Additional Information

If you have questions about the activities at the Westbank Asbestos site, please contact:

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Beginning September 19, 1996, the EPA will operate a command post and outreach office near the State Bldg. located at 2150 Westbank Expressway in Harvey, Louisiana. The EPA personnel will be available for questions there or in the neighborhoods during removal and assessment activities. This local command post phone number is (504) 363-4917.

Questions from the media should be directed to : EPA Region 6 Office of External Affairs at (214) 665-2200

The Removal Action will be funded by EPA Superfund. EPA has no plans to recover clean-up costs from residential property owners.

Property Access

The Removal Action is expected to last several months. EPA is requesting VOLUNTARY access from residential property owners to access their property to remove the ACM from their yards. Prior to removing the ACM from each

individual property, EPA will mail or hand deliver an access agreement to each identified property owner and will make attempts to visit with each property owner to answer questions and ensure signature of the access agreement. If an access agreement for a particular property cannot be obtained, EPA and LDEQ will notify the property owner of the applicable asbestos removal regulations, however, ACM removal by individuals is not advisable or recommended.

Health and Safety Issues

Asbestos is designated as a Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act (CERCLA)-hazardous substance and is found at the Westbank Asbestos Site in quantities and physical form such that it poses a release or threat of release at the Site's numerous locations. The ACM is located in residential yards, playgrounds, and other areas easily accessible to the

public. In its current physical state, the ACM poses an immediate risk to public health.

The removal, transportation, and disposal of the ACM will be subcontracted to local companies through the U.S. Army Corp of Engineers (USACE). All work performed will be supervised to ensure applicable Federal/State regulations and safe work procedures are followed. Each individual clean-up site will be monitored to assure protection of public health.

LDEQ and Louisiana Office of Public Health (LOPH) have prepared a question and answer

fact sheet addressing common health concerns relating to asbestos exposure. If you haven't received this health fact sheet, one will be given to you upon request.

The Removal Program of Superfund

A removal action is a short-term response intended to stabilize or clean up an incident or site that poses a threat to public health or the environment.

The EPA's goal in the removal action for this project is to reduce a sufficient volume of ACM from

each property to significantly reduce the likelihood of future releases.



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• **Westbank Asbestos Site Update •**
• **Community Meeting: September 12, 1996 - 5 to 8 p. m. •**